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Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-05 /068 W
---------- 124205
R 211134Z MAY 75
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4534
INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 5990

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PFOR ET FR
SUBJECT: PMAC AND THE AFAR (CONTINUED)

REF: (A) ADDIS 5421; (B) ADDIS 5721; (C) ADDIS 5927

SUMMARY. DURING RECENT VISIT TO DJIBOUTI, EMBOFF DISCUSSED AT LENGTH WITH AFAR AND FRENCH LEADERS, INCLUDING TFAI HIGH COMMISSIONER DABLANC, TOPIC OF AFAR-PMAC RELATIONS. THESE DISCUSSIONS MADE CLEAR BASIC AFAR DISTRUST AND FEAR OF PTAC AND AFAR BELIEF THAT THE PMAC IS MANEUVERING TO REPLACE ALI MIRAH WITH A MORE "SYMPATHETIC" AFAR SULTAN. THEY ALSO REVEALED THAT A RECENT EPMG DELEGATION TO DJIBOUTI HAD TOLD THE FRENCH THAT THE PMAC WAS NOW PREPARED TO OFFER ERITREA SOME SORT OF FEDERATED STATUS. END SUMMARY.

1. A PRIMARY TOPIC OF CONVERSATION DURING EMBOFF'S DJIBOUTI VISIT MAY 12-17 (CF. REF C) WAS AFAR-PMAC RELATIONS. EMBASSY HAS HEARD FROM USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCES (INCLUDING MOFA SOURCE REPORTED IN REF B) THAT THE AFAR DELEGATION (CF. REF A) AND THE PMAC REACHED AN UNDERSTANDING ON AT LEAST SEVERAL IMPORTANT
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ISSUES. MOST SOURCES AGREE THAT THE PMAC PROMISED TO RETURN

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TRACTORS TAKEN FROM THE AFAR AFTER THE INITIAL LAND REFORM PROCLAMATION AND TO CANCEL THE AFARS' $20 MILLION BANK LOAN DEBT. MOST SOURCES REPORT THAT THE PMAC ALSO AGREED TO POSTPONE OR EVEN ABANDON IMPLEMENTATION OF LAND REFORM MEASURES IN THE AFAR REGION OF AOUSSA. ONE RELIABLE AFAR SOURCE, HOWEVER, WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE ADDIS DISCUSSIONS AND IS CLOSE TO SULTAN ALI MIRAH, TOLD EMBOFF IN DJIBOUTI THAT THE PMAC HAD, IN FACT, REFUSED TO BUDGE ON THE LAND REFORM ISSUE. THE PMAC STILL REQUIRED THE AFAR TO DEVELOP PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS OF 80 FAMILIES PER 200 HECTARES. COMMENT: THERE IS PLENTY OF LEEWAY IN THE TEXT OF THE LAND REFORM PROCLAMATION TO PROVIDE A COMPROMISE ON THIS ISSUE. THE MOST LOGICAL COURSE WOULD BE FOR THE PMAC TO GIVE SOMEWHAT, AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT.

2. EMBOFF WAS REPEATEDLY CONFRONTED WITH DEEP AND ABIDING AFAR FEAR AND DISTRUST OF THE PMAC. MANY AFAR REPEATED RUMOR THEY BELIEVED TO BE TRUE THAT THE PMAC HAD SENT TROOPS IN LATE APRIL TO CAPTURE OR KILL ALI MIRAH BUT HAD CALLED OFF THE OPERATION AT THE LAST MINUTE. A RELIABLE AFAR SOURCE REPORTED THAT, IN FACT, THE MILITARY GOVERNOR OF BATI (THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF AOUSSA) CALLED IN TROOPS TO BATI BECAUSE OF LOCAL DISORDERS. SOURCE DID NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE TROOPS WERE MEANT TO ARREST ALI MIRAH.

3. AFAR SOURCES FIRMLY BELIEVE "DIRG" IS PLANNING SOME MEANS TO REPLACE ALI MIRAH WITH AN AFAR PUPPET RELATIVELY LOYAL TO THE PMAC. AFARS BELIEVE PUPPET WOULD COME FROM THE YAYO MOHAMED LINE (WHICH HISTORICALLY HAS PROVIDED RIVALS TO SULTANS OF ALI MIRAH'S CLAN).

4. IN DISCUSSING POSSIBLE PMAC MOVES AGAINST ALI MIRAH, FRENCH TFAI HIGH COMMISSIONER DABLANC COMMENTED THAT IF A SOLUTION TO THE ERITREAN PROBLEM WERE TO BE FOUND HE BELIEVED THE PMAC WOULD BE MUCH LESS CONCERNED WITH ALI MIRAH AND HIS ACTIVITIES.

5. CONCERNING ERITREA, DABLANC SAID THAT MOFA OFFICIAL DR. FITIGU TADESSE (RECENTLY APPOINTED ETHIOPIAN CONSUL GENERAL TO DJIBOUTI WITH PERSONAL RANK OF AMBASSADOR WHO HAS JUST VISITED THE TFAI AND WILL TAKE UP HIS POSITION IN SEVERAL WEEKS) STATED THAT THE EPMG IS NOW WILLING TO OFFER THE ERITREANS "A REAL FEDERA-
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TION." WHEN EMBOFF ASKED DABLANC IF LATTER THOUGHT THE EPMG'S OFFER WOULD INCLUDE TRULY MEANINGFUL AUTONOMY FOR ERITREA, THE HIGH COMMISSIONER JUDGED THAT IT PROBABLY DID NOT RPT NOT.

6. EMBOFF ATTEMPTED TO RUN DOWN TRUTH OF RUMORS IN ADDIS THAT EITHER THE FRENCH OR THE EPMG HAD INTERCEPTED AN ARMS SHIPMENT TO ALI MIRAH. DABLANC'S CHEF DE CABINET, FABRY, STATED FLATLY THAT THE FRENCH DID NOT INTERCEPT ANY SHIPMENT MEANT FOR ALI

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MIRAH. A RELIABLE AFAR SOURCE STATED EQUALLY CONCLUSIVELY THAT THE EPMG HAD NOT INTERCEPTED ARMS GOING TO ALI MIRAH. HE INTIMATED THAT THE FRENCH HAD INTERCEPTED ARMS PROBABLY DESTINED FOR A NON-AFAR ETHIOPIAN RECIPIENT. ACCORDING TO DABLANC, MOST ARMS GOING TO ALI MIRAH ENTER VIA THE ASSAB-MASSAWA COAST RATHER THAN THROUGH THE TFAI. COMMENT: DABLANC LIKELY WAS NOT CANDID ON THIS ISSUE. THE FRENCH NEED THE AFAR AND HAVE HISTORICALLY WINKED AT ARMS AND COMMERCIAL SMUGGLING BY THE AFAR THROUGH THE TFAI. END COMMENT. DABLANC ADMITTED THAT DR. FITIGU, DURING HIS VISIT, HAD STRONGLY REQUESTED THAT THE FRENCH PREVENT FUTURE AFAR ARMS TRAFFIC. HOWEVER, DABLANC SHRUGGED AND SAID, "THE FRENCH HAVE ENOUGH DIFFICULTIES WITH THE SOMALIS AND INTERNAL TFAI PROBLEMS WITHOUT SEEKING THEM WITH ALI MIRAH AND THE ETHIOPIAN AFAR."

7. DABLANC NOTED THAT THE DJIBOUTI RUMOR MILL INDICATED THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD "AGREED TO PROVIDE ARMS, CASH OR BOTH TO ALI MIRAH." (EMBOFF HAD HEARD THE SAME RUMORS FROM SOME AFARS.) EMBOFF STATED EMPHATICALLY THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD NOT GIVEN NOR WAS IT CONSIDERING PROVISION OF SUCH ASSISTANCE TO THE AFAR. HE THEN REITERATED THE US POSITION OF SUPPORT FOR ETHIOPIA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND FOR A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF ETHIOPIA'S DIVERSE TERRITORIAL PROBLEMS AND ETHNIC DIVISIONS.
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